SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENT RECONSTRUCTION, LLC

The School Bus Collision Investigation Online Newsletter

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- Accurate school bus passenger seating charts are an essential part of a valid collision investigation but do not provide the same detailed information provided by onboard video-recordings.
- School buses without videotape recorders put the SBCIT at a significant disadvantage in litigation.

Why Police Accident Reports Alone are Not Enough for a Collision Investigation

The Police Accident Report (PAR) is not enough for an effective school district defense. Assuming that the PAR is sufficient for a strong defense in court may not be valid for a variety of reasons. The school district is left with a poor defense against unfavorable litigation, and the high costs and a significant impact to district taxpayers when self-insured districts must pay for out of court settlements. Other districts that are not self-insured face fleet insurance rates skyrocketing following a million dollar plus settlement. The Police Vehicle Accident Report is not enough for the SBCI Team to determine from the PAR:

Is the Bus Passenger Roster Complete? Police routinely interview each pedestrian on board the bus following a collision to obtain their name, their age or the grade in which they currently enrolled and attach a complete list of pedestrian bus occupants to the vehicle accident report. That list may not be complete or accurate.

Is the Police Accident Report representative of both the school bus driver and the other driver's perspectives? School Bus Collision Investigators must view the collision from the other driver's perspective and not automatically assume that it was the other driver's fault. Transportation Directors maintain a prejudice for or against the "other driver" that the SBCIT must not share in order to do an accurate and valid collision investigation.

Is the Police Accident Report accurate with respect to collision details? Unless there is a fatality involved police supervisors provide very little time for an onsite investigation of a school bus collision. Their policy may be to avoid completing the PAR and instead focus on quickly clearing onsite traffic backups.

The Videotaped Collision from Inside the Bus: 5 Seconds of Compelling Evidence

A 1000 words in a Police Accident Report describing who was seated where, who was nearest the point of impact or who was ejected out of their seats is typically not provided in the PAR. Any PAR is incomplete without a single 5 second videotape of the collision event from the student passenger and driver perspective. Some of today's school bus fleets are equipped with videotape monitoring of student misbehavior with a time and date stamp. One videosource from front to back is adequate but two or three camera views provide conclusive evidence for passenger ejection from their compartmentalization envelope, improper seated or standing positions at the moment of collision and other revealing facts.